

CONTOUR STRUCTURES TO HIGHLIGHT INSPECTION REGIONS

DESCRIPTION

[Para 1] BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[Para 2] Field of the Invention

[Para 3] The invention generally relates to inspection marks for probe contacts adjacent wirebond connections, where the inspection marks comprise marks in the same conductor that is used as the probe pad and the wirebond connection.

[Para 4] Description of the Related Art

[Para 5] Wirebond connections are commonly used on the exterior layer of integrated circuits and chips to connect the circuitry within the chips to external devices and wiring boards. A wirebond connection comprises a conductive wire from an external device that is bonded to a conductive connection on the wafer or chip. It is common to form conductive probe contacts to which test probes and other similar devices make temporary contact when testing the chip. These probe contacts are formed next to the wirebond connection and are electrically connected to the wirebond connection.

[Para 6] Wirebond connections are being made with finer and finer pitch (e.g., are being made smaller and closer together). However, even as wirebond connections are being placed closer together, the probe contact

(where the wafer tester touches down on the wafer) needs to be offset from the wirebond location in order to allow a good wirebond connection that has high yield and reliability. Failure to provide sufficient pristine pad surface area for the probe contact has shown to lead to yield and reliability failures. A visual inspection is typically performed by operators and a subjective decision is made as to whether the wirebond location has been damaged by the probe contact. Without a clearly marked inspection region, it is difficult to clearly determine whether the probe produced damage is outside the area in which the wirebond will be formed.

[Para 7] SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[Para 8]

[Para 9] Presented below is a method of creating inspection marks for probe contacts adjacent wirebond connections. More specifically, this method creates an inspection mark between a wirebond connection region and a probe pad region of a pad. The method first forms an insulator layer over a wiring layer and then simultaneously patterns a wiring contact opening and an inspection mark opening in the insulator layer. The method then deposits a conductor material over the insulator layer. The conductor material fills the wiring contact opening and the inspection mark opening and forms the pad on the insulator layer. The conductor material within the inspection mark opening forms the inspection mark that is between the wirebond connection region and the probe pad region. Following this, the invention forms a polyimide layer above the conductive material and forms a second opening in the polyimide layer. The pad is exposed through this second opening.

[Para 10] The inspection mark opening is formed above an insulating region of the wiring layer. The conductor material comprises a refractive metal, such as aluminum, tantalum, titanium, and alloys thereof. The inspection mark delineates where probe inspection marks are permitted on the pad.

[Para 11] The structure produced is an integrated circuit that has a wiring layer below the insulator layer. The pad comprises the conductive material that is on the insulator layer. The pad has a wirebond connection region and a probe pad region. The inspection mark is between the wirebond connection region and the probe pad region. The inspection mark comprises an opening in the insulator layer that is filled with the conductive material. In addition, the contact that is through the insulator layer is adapted to electrically connect the conductor wire in the wiring layer to the pad and the contact is formed of the same conductive material used for the pad and the inspection mark.

[Para 12] Thus, the invention creates "inspection regions" by creating a 3-dimensional topography on the Al bond pad. One advantage of this invention is that it can be implemented and inspected independently of the final aestivation process or the material used in the final aestivation process. Therefore, the invention can be used, for example, with polyimide materials that do not provide easy inspection markings.

[Para 13] These and other aspects of embodiments of the invention will be better appreciated and understood when considered in conjunction with the following description and the accompanying drawings. It should be understood, however, that the following description, while indicating preferred embodiments of the invention and numerous specific details thereof, is given by way of illustration and not of limitation. Many changes and modifications may be made within the scope of the embodiments of the invention without departing from the spirit thereof, and the invention includes all such modifications.

[Para 14] BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[Para 15] The embodiments of the invention will be better understood from the following detailed description with reference to the drawings, in which:

[Para 16] Figure 1 is a schematic top-view diagram of a wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 17] Figure 2 is a schematic top-view diagram of a wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 18] Figure 3 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 19] Figure 4 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 20] Figure 5 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 21] Figure 6 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 22] Figure 7 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 23] Figure 8 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 24] Figure 9 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 25] Figure 10 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 26] Figure 11 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad;

[Para 27] Figure 12 is a schematic cross-sectional-view diagram of a partially completed wire bond connection and probe contact pad; and

[Para 28] Figure 13 is a flow diagram illustrating a preferred method of the invention.

[Para 29] DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED

[Para 30] EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[Para 31] The embodiments of the invention and the various features and advantageous details thereof are explained more fully with reference to the non-limiting embodiments that are illustrated in the accompanying drawings and detailed in the following description. It should be noted that the features illustrated in the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale. Descriptions of well-known components and processing techniques are omitted so as to not unnecessarily obscure the embodiments of the invention. The examples used herein are intended merely to facilitate an understanding of ways in which the embodiments of the invention may be practiced and to further enable those of skill in the art to practice the embodiments of the invention. Accordingly, the examples should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention.

[Para 32] Figure 1 is a top view schematic diagram of a pad 10 that includes a wire bond region 12 where a wire bond 16 is formed and a probe pad region 14 where a test probe will contact the pad 10 and leave a probe mark 18. The probe mark 18 is a damaged area of the pad 10 that results from the physical contact of the test probe. The damaged nature of the probe mark 18 would not form a good wire bond connection.

[Para 33] Therefore, before the wire bond 16 is formed on the pad 10, a visual inspection is typically performed by operators after the probe has contacted the pad 10 and the mark 18 has been formed on the pad. A subjective decision is then made as to whether the probe mark 18 is far enough from the wirebond region 12 so that the damage of the probe mark 18 will not affect the integrity of the wirebond 16. In order to ensure that the mark 18 left by the probe is not too far into the wirebond region 12, as shown in Figure 2, the invention creates inspection marks 20 using three-dimensional

topography. The inspection marks make it easier to evaluate whether the probe mark 18 is outside the area that will be used for the wirebond 16. Therefore, the inspection marks 20 delineate the where the probe pad region 14 stops and where the wirebond region 12 begins. While two marks are shown in Figure 2, one ordinarily skilled in the art would understand that one mark or more than two marks could be used within the scope of the invention. Further, while one wirebond connection 16 and one probe mark 18 are shown between the two marks 20, one ordinarily skilled in the art would also understand that a single mark could be used to distinguish multiple wirebond regions 12 from multiple probe pad regions 14.

[Para 34] The inspection marks 20 comprise a conductor filled opening in an underlying insulator. The conductive contact that electrically connects a conductor wire in the underlying wiring layer to the pad (discussed in detail below) comprises the same conductive material as the inspection mark 20. Because the inspection mark 20 is formed of the same metal used for the underlying contact 72, the probe mark 20 is not affected by the final passivation process. Therefore, the invention can be easily used with passivation materials which are not readily patterned into marks, such as polyimide materials.

[Para 35] Figures 3–12 illustrate one exemplary method of creating one or more inspection marks for one or more probe contacts adjacent to one or more wirebond connections. This method is only an example, and those ordinarily skilled in the art would understand that other similar methods and derivations thereof could be used with equal effectiveness. Figure 3 illustrates a small portion of a wiring layer comprising an insulating region 30 and a conductive wire 32. While one wire 32 is illustrated, one ordinarily skilled in the art would understand that the wiring layer 30 would actually contain many wires.

[Para 36] As shown in Figure 4, an insulator layer 40 is formed over the wiring layer 30. The insulator layer 40 can comprise, for example, a deposited oxide or any other suitable insulator. A mask 50 (shown in Figure 5) is then

patterned over the insulator layer 40 using any conventional mask patterning techniques, such as exposing an organic photoresist, developing the resist, and rinsing the exposed or unexposed portions of the mask to leave the patterned mask. Many other types of masks are well known and could be used with the invention.

[Para 37] The method then simultaneously patterns a wiring contact opening 60 and an inspection mark opening 62 in the insulator layer 40, as shown in Figure 6. The material removal process shown in Figure 6 could comprise any conventional material removal process including etching and chemical treatment. The material removal process is preferably selective to the insulating material 40 such that the process removes the portions of the insulator layer 40 that are not protected by the mask without substantially affecting the mask 50 or the underlying conductor 32 or insulator 30.

[Para 38] As shown in Figure 7, the mask 50 is removed using a selective rinsing process that does not substantially affect the other components, but easily rinses the mask material 50 from the structure. Following this, a conductor 70 is deposited over the structure. The conductor 70 comprises any useful conductor, such as a refractory metal, including aluminum, tantalum, titanium, and alloys thereof that will conformally adhere to the insulator 40. As shown in Figure 7, the conductor 70 forms a contact 72 to the underlying wiring conductor 32 and also forms the probe pad inspection mark 20. Thus, the inspection mark 20 can be considered a valley or recess in the pad 10. The inspection mark 20 is a 3-dimensional feature where the otherwise planar topography of the pad 10 is changed in a way that is visible to the outside. The opening 62 that is filled with the conductor 70 creates this 3-dimensional feature and forms the inspection mark 20.

[Para 39] In addition, the portions of the conductor 70 that remain on the upper surface of the insulator layer 40 comprise the pad 10 which will have the probe pad region 14 and the wirebond region 12. Since the probe pad inspection mark 20 is made of the same material 70 as the contact 72, the probe pad inspection mark 20 will survive all subsequent processing that the

contact 72 survives. Therefore, for example, if polyimide processing is subsequently performed, the probe pad inspection mark 20 will survive such processing and remain as a visible inspection aid.

[Para 40] In Figure 8, a passivation layer 80, such as polyimide, etc. is deposited over the structure. Next a mask 90, shown in Figure 9, that is similar to mask 50 discussed above, is formed over the passivation layer 80. As shown in Figure 10, the passivation layer 80 is patterned through the mask 90 to form an opening in the passivation layer 80 using similar material removal process techniques to those discussed above. The opening exposes the wirebond region 12 and the probe pad region 14 of the pad 10.

[Para 41] The mask 90 is then removed, as shown in Figure 11, again using processing discussed above. Figure 11 illustrates a probe 110, such as a test probe that could make temporary contact with the pad 10. The probe 110 preferably contacts the pad 10 in the probe pad region 14. As shown in Figure 12, once the probe 110 is removed, a damaged area 18 that is the probe mark 18 may remain. As mentioned above, the irregular contours and the potential contamination caused in the probe mark 18 by the probe 110 makes the probe mark 18 an undesirable region in which to form the wirebond 16. Therefore, the wirebond 16 is formed by depositing or forming a solder ball 120 and connecting a wire 122 to the solder ball. Both structures 120, 122 are formed using well-known wirebonding techniques, such as convention tape transfer or similar techniques, leaving the structure shown in Figures 12.

[Para 42] The structure shown in Figure 12 comprises an integrated circuit structure that has a wiring layer 30 below the insulator layer 40. The pad 10 comprises the conductive material 70 that is on the insulator layer 40. The pad 10 has a wirebond connection region 12 and a probe pad region 14. The inspection mark 20 is between the wirebond connection region 12 and the probe pad region 14. The inspection mark 20 comprises an opening in the insulator layer 42 that is filled with the conductive material 70. In addition, the contact 72 that is through the insulator layer 40 and is adapted to electrically connect the conductor wire 32 in the wiring layer 30 to the pad 10

and the contact 42, is also formed of the same conductive material 70 used for the pad 10 and the inspection mark 20.

[Para 43] Figure 13 illustrates the above processing in flowchart form. More specifically, in item 130, the invention forms the insulator layer over the wiring layer and then, in item 132 the invention simultaneously patterns a wiring contact opening and an inspection mark opening in the insulator layer. The method then deposits a conductor material over the insulator layer in item 134. The conductor material fills the wiring contact opening and the inspection mark opening and forms the pad on the insulator layer. The conductor material within the inspection mark opening forms the inspection mark that is between the wirebond connection region and the probe pad region. Following this, the invention forms a passivation layer above the conductive material (136) and forms a second opening in the passivation layer in item 138. The pad is exposed through this second opening. After this, the probe contacts the pad in item 140 and the pad is inspected to determine if the damage left by the probe mark is outside the area reserved for the wirebond connection in item 142. After this, the wirebond connection is formed in item 144.

[Para 44] Thus, the invention creates "inspection regions" 20 by creating a 3-dimensional topography that is visible through the probe pad 122. One advantage of this invention is that it can be implemented and inspected independently of the final passivation process. Therefore, the invention can be used with polyimide and other materials. Because the inspection mark 20 is formed of the same metal used for the underlying contact 32 and pad 10, the inspection mark 20 is not affected by the final passivation process. Therefore, the invention can be easily used with passivation materials which are not readily patterned into marks, such as polyimide materials.

[Para 45] The creation of inspection regions allows for the reduction of overall wirebond / probe pad size. This is accomplished by the removal of tolerance associated with the inspection process when there is no identifying wirebond region to probe region delimiter.

[Para 46] The foregoing description of the specific embodiments reveals the general nature of the invention such that others can, by applying current knowledge, readily modify and/or adapt for various applications of such specific embodiments without departing from the generic concept. Therefore, such adaptations and modifications should and are intended to be comprehended within the meaning and range of equivalents of the disclosed embodiments. It is to be understood that the phraseology or terminology employed herein is for the purpose of description and not of limitation. Therefore, while the invention has been described in terms of preferred embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that the invention can be practiced with modification within the spirit and scope of the appended claims.